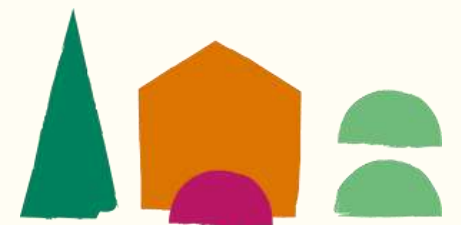




Urban design as a place-based  
approach to community health  
and wellbeing

May 2023



Dr Rachel Turnbull  
Programme Lead &  
Co-Creator  
AHSN NENC



**Supporting and creating mental health  
and wellbeing through the design of  
places and spaces**



.....using a multi-sector approach between health, public health, architecture/design, the arts, planning/regeneration, and citizens



.....focussing on areas of inequalities



**Healthy  
Happy  
Places**

With thanks to funding from:

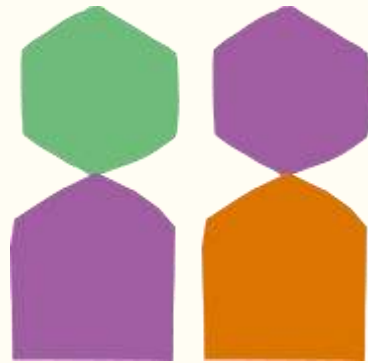


**Academic Health  
Science Network**  
North East and North Cumbria





Place specific



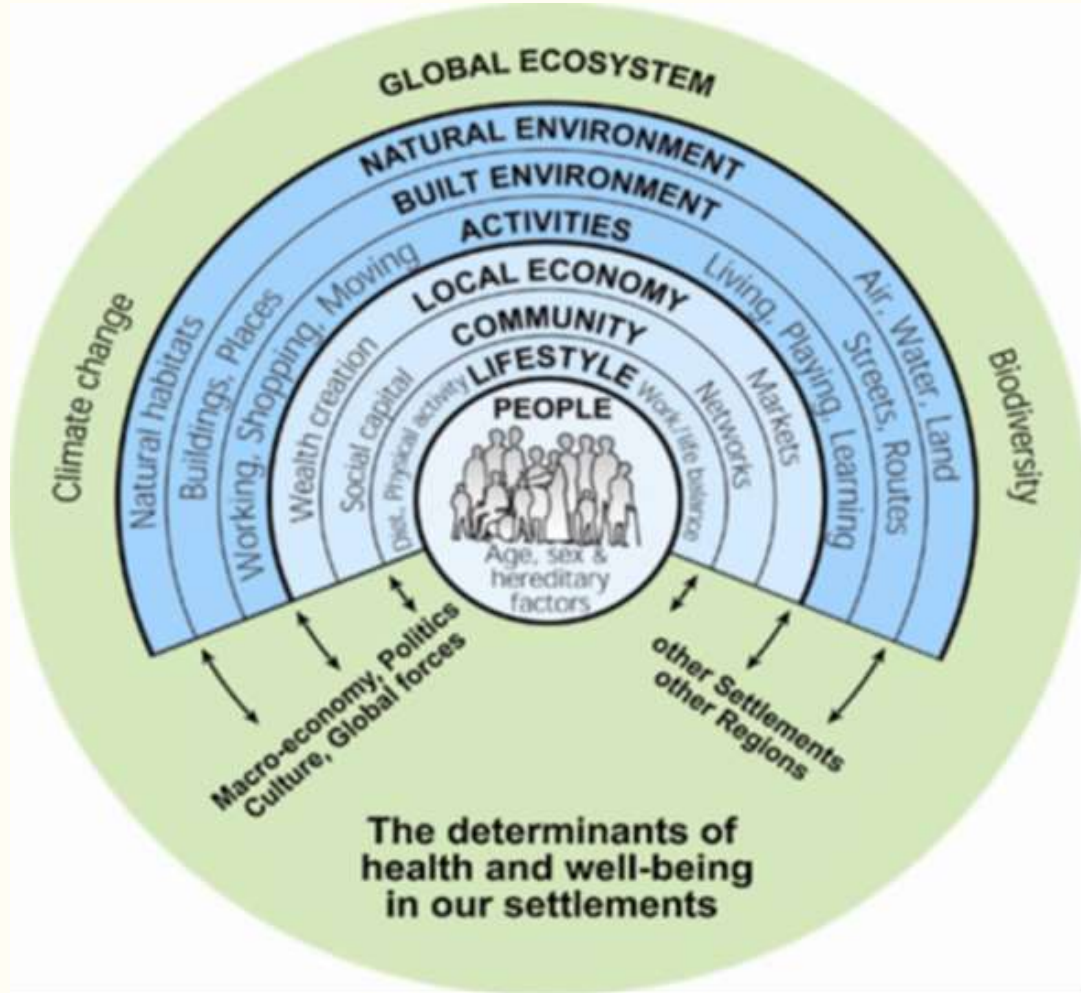
People



Buildings & spaces  
in between



Evidence →  
Implementation

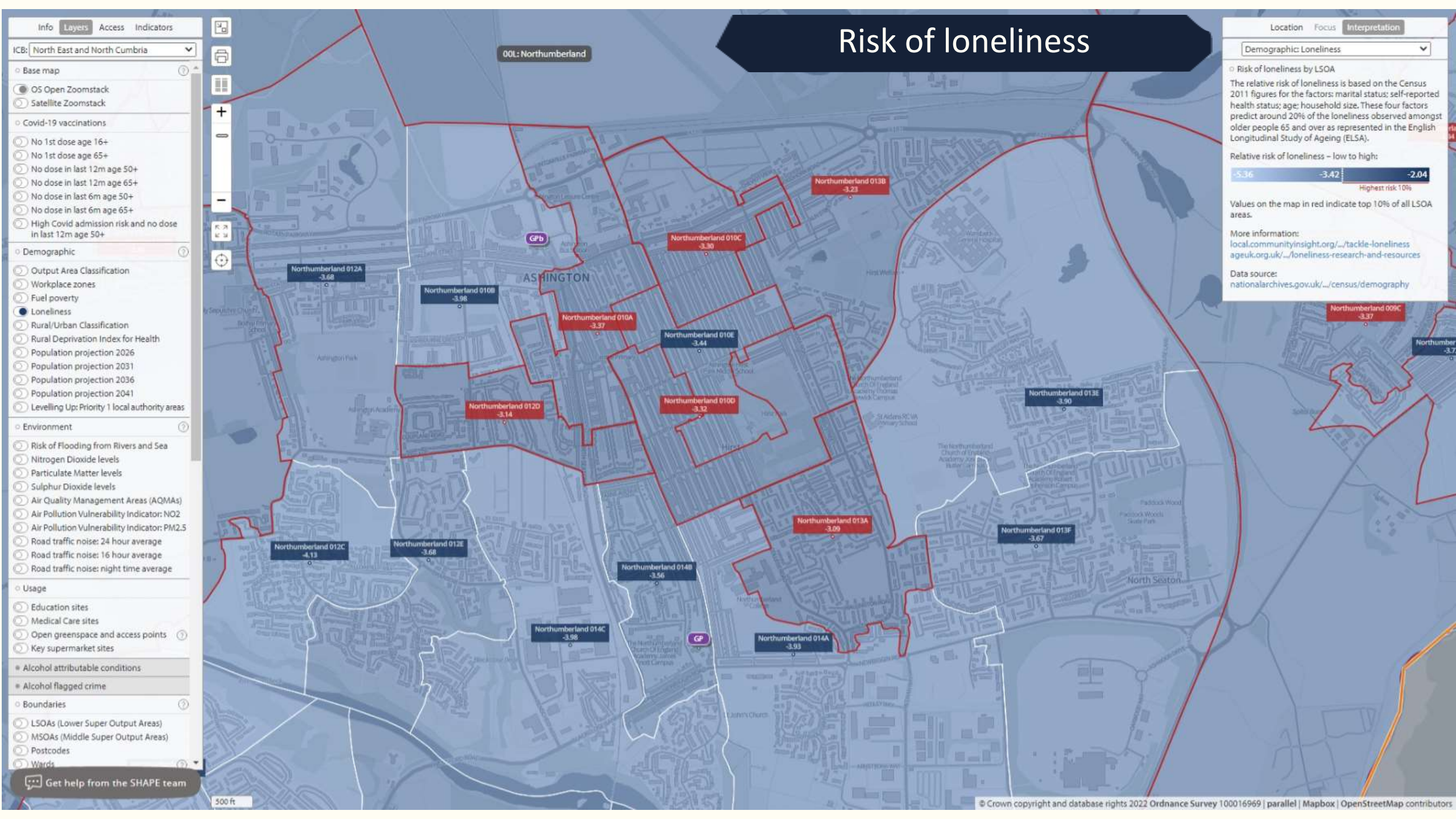


Settlement health map (Barton, 2009)

“People’s opportunities for health are influenced by factors outside of the health and social care system. They lie in the circumstances in which people are born, grow, live, work, and age: the social determinants of health. These are the ‘causes of the causes’ of ill health and they can enable individuals and societies to flourish, or not. Creating a healthier population requires greater action on these issues. This includes addressing the role of both the physical built environment and the social factors which shape neighbourhoods and places” (pg. 4; NHS England, 2019a).

UK reported to be “worse than any other EU country for social isolation and neighbourhood belonging” (pg. 6) with the cost of this estimated to be £32billion per year (Eden Project Communities).

# Risk of loneliness



# Social Safeness - the extent to which people experience their world as safe, warm, and soothing.

People with “**high loneliness** reported significantly higher fears of expressing compassion for others and self, and receiving compassion from others, as well as **lower reported social safeness, subjective happiness and social connection** compared to those with reported low loneliness” (Best et al, 2021).

“A positive feeling state that can help to regulate other emotions but can be there independently. It is experienced as a feeling of warmth and connectedness. It differs from attachment security in that it extends to the **wider social environment**, where others are perceived and experienced as soothing. It is likely related to individual capacity and **related to the environment itself** (Gilbert, 2009)” Quoted by Angela Kennedy.



# Placemaking

“an approach and a set of tools that puts the community front and centre of determining what their place looks like and how it functions” ([Cara Courage, Healthy Happy Places webinar presentation, 2023](#))

If healing and recovery requires a multi-dimensional approach, with foci on the environment as well as the individual, then placemaking becomes an important part of the ‘system’ for thinking about how wellbeing and mental health can be created and supported within communities, and for us all.



‘The community is the expert in their own lives.’

Jeanne van Heeswijk



Trauma informed



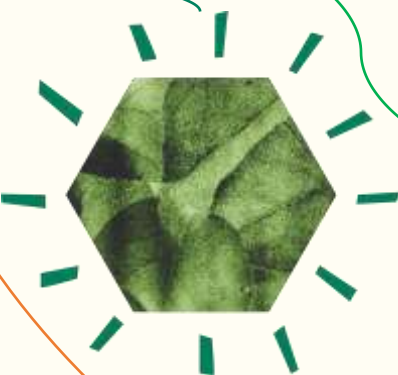
Neurodiverse aware



Dementia friendly



Arts / Creative



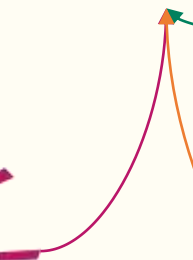
Biophilic /  
Nature inspired



Community owned /  
activated



Lifestyle Security







## Understanding Place

Data  
+  
lived experience through  
creative practice



## Interventions in Place

Co-produced  
'Ground-up'



## Evaluation in Place

Capturing impact

Understanding  
Place

## Creative commission: 'Places of Sanctuary'

How can our towns create and nurture positive mental health and wellbeing for all?

- Can sanctuary be found in a physical place or is it an imagined space, or a mix of both?
- What would an imagined safe space look and feel like?
- How can this be applied to real spaces in the town centre?
- How can we make shared public spaces feel more welcoming, safe, joyful?





[Places of Sanctuary animation \(Wallsend\)](#)

[Further info: Wallsend, North Tyneside – Places of Sanctuary - AHSN NENC \(ahsn-nenc.org.uk\)](#)

[Places of Sanctuary zine \('zeen'\)](#)

# A place to grow

A PLACE TO HAVE A FUTURE

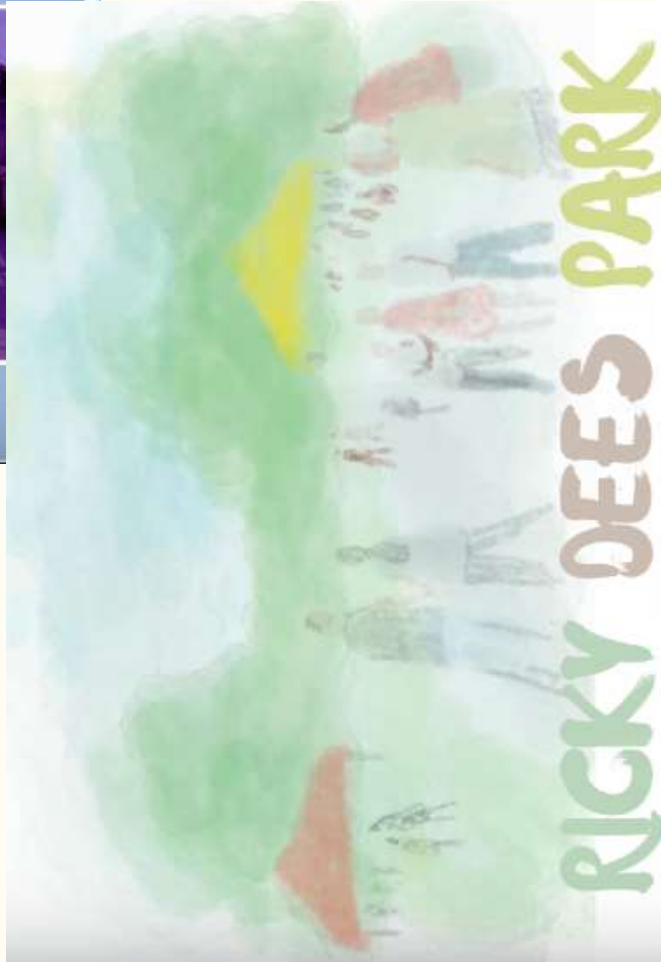


"YOU CAN'T DO LEVELLING UP TOP DOWN  
YOU HAVE TO DO IT BOTTOM UP"

WHEN PEOPLE THINK  
ABOUT IMPROVEMENT  
THEY ONLY LOOK AT  
THE NEGATIVE THINGS  
AND NOT THE  
POSITIVE.



-ALISON



Ricky Dees Park would be in my masterplan.

It's a place where people can meet in the open air and celebrate Wallsend. I'd have school celebrations of Wallsend's history from the vikings to the Romans through to the Georgians, the Victorians and the shipyards and the coal mines and the rock stars and Oscar nominated actresses who say they're from Wallsend.

There would be open air community theatre pieces and singing and processions.

And stargazing.

- Mary Pickin





*“Creative, kind-hearted and structured. It was fun and prompted me to use my own creativity (art and writing) more effectively.”*

***“My experience on the project was amazing. Meeting people and sharing experiences they share of Wallsend.”***

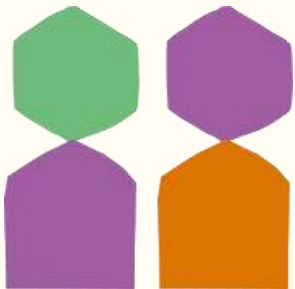
*“Brilliant. Really enjoyed the experience and you learn new things.”*

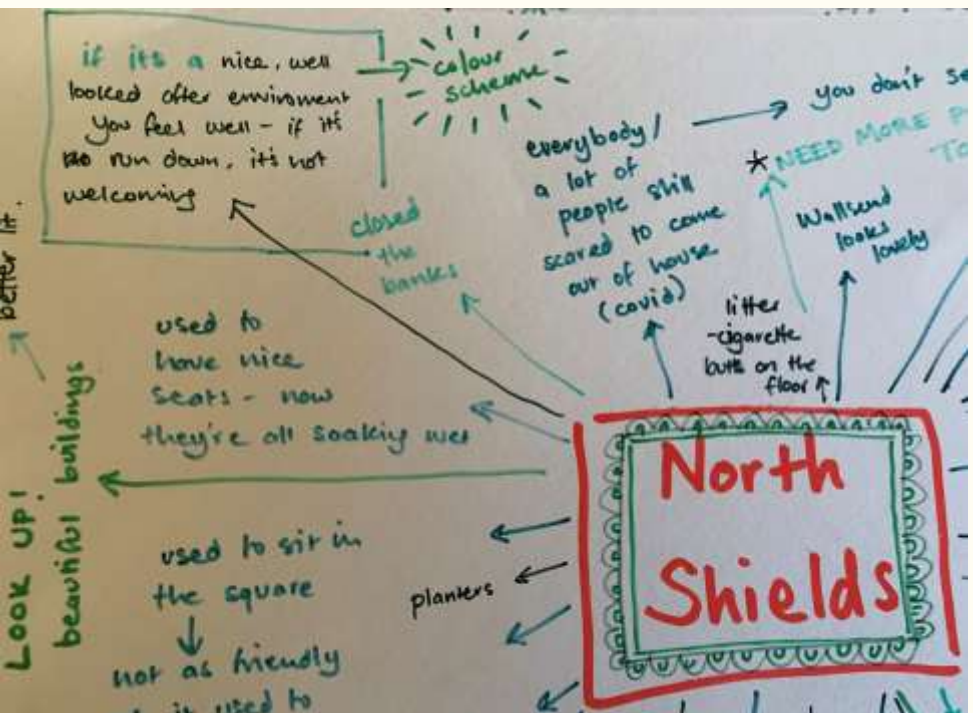
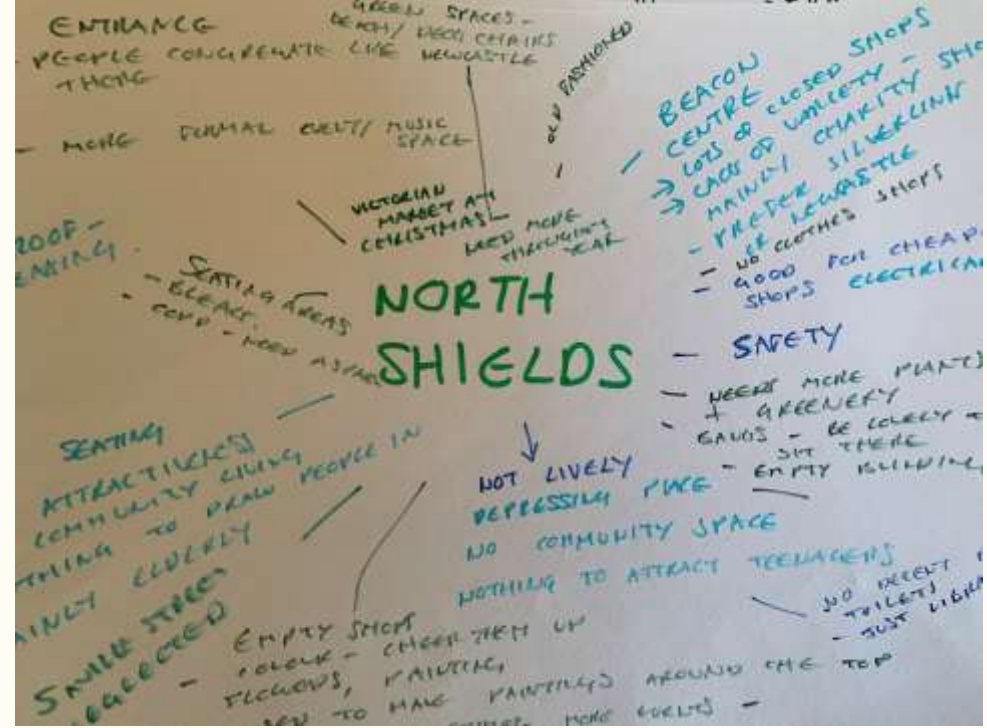
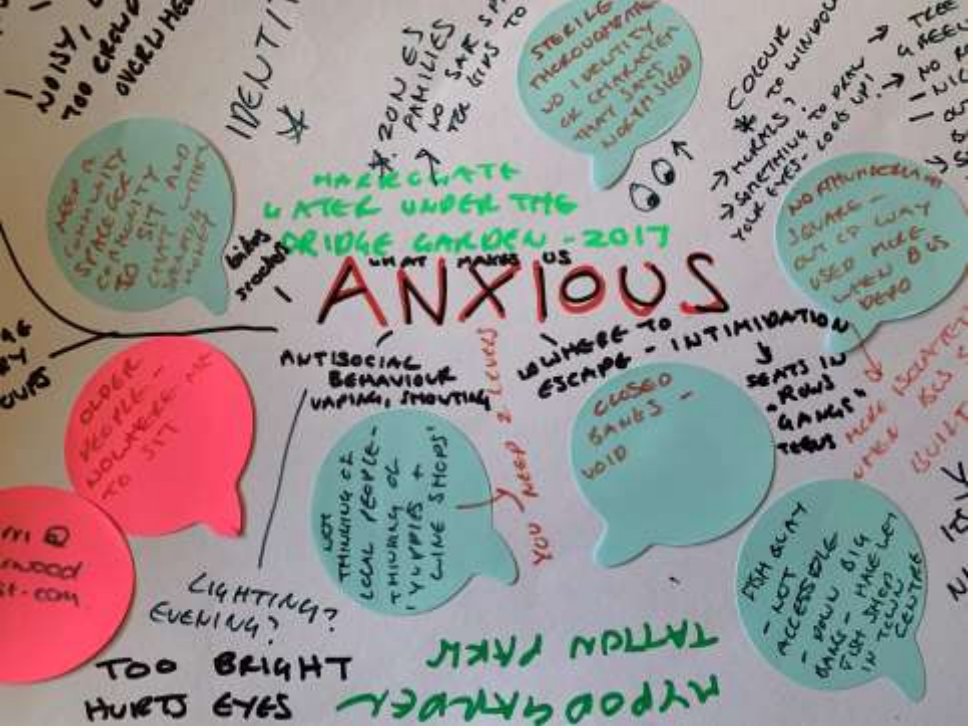
***“I went from being unsure about whether to participate to feeling I and others present had a valuable contribution and our voices were heard.”***

*“The confidence Mustard Stories has given me is fantastic, I’m using my art and creative writing now to greater effect. I would heartily recommend people to attend your workshops.”*

***“I used to love going to live productions and visiting places where people’s creations were displayed. The community needs some enjoyable, more social places where people with common interests can get together and share with each other.”***

*“Reopen the Buddle Arts Centre. Wallsend forum and high street is maybe not the most attractive place and looks ran down. But apparently there is a master plan to make it better! But this is a strange place and the people are strong. Consult the people.”*





**CEDARWOOD TRUST**  
Nurture - Nourish - Thrive

**CHANGING LIVES**



# What does Sanctuary look like to you?

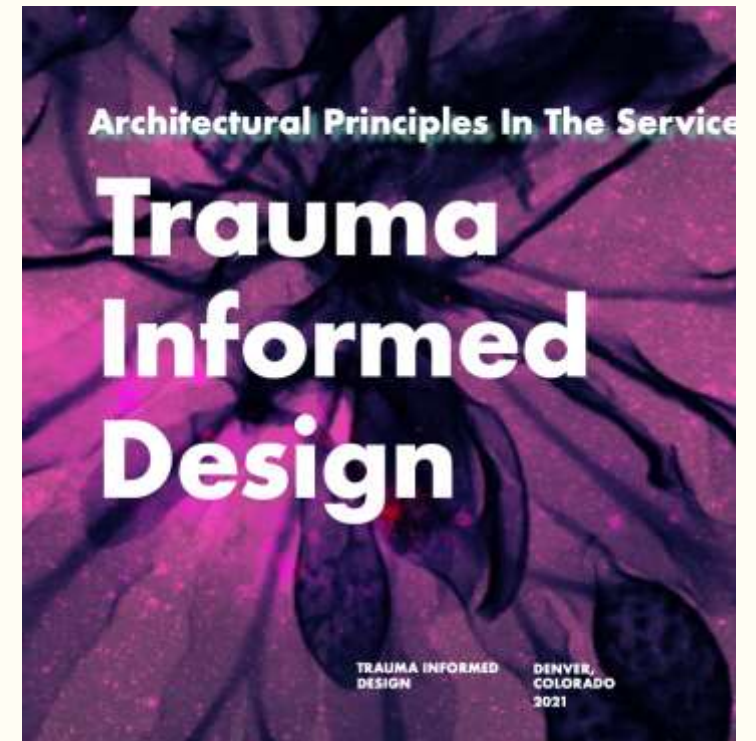
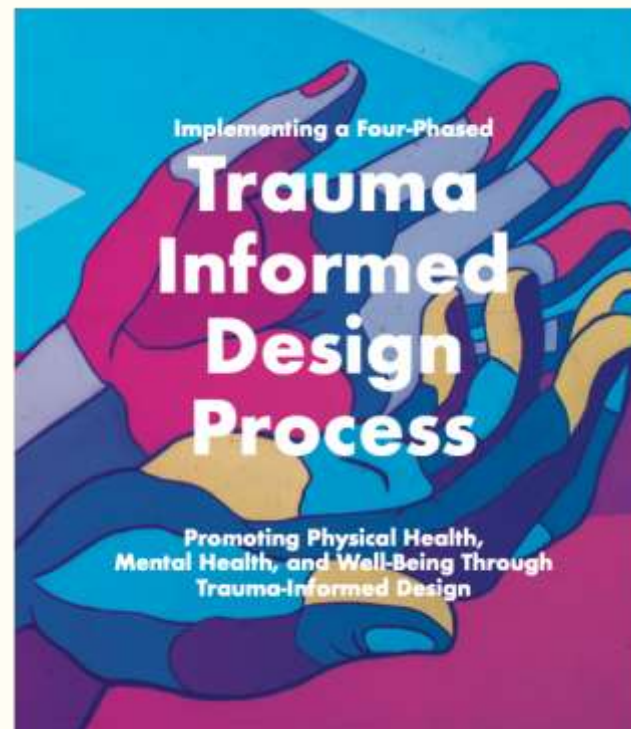
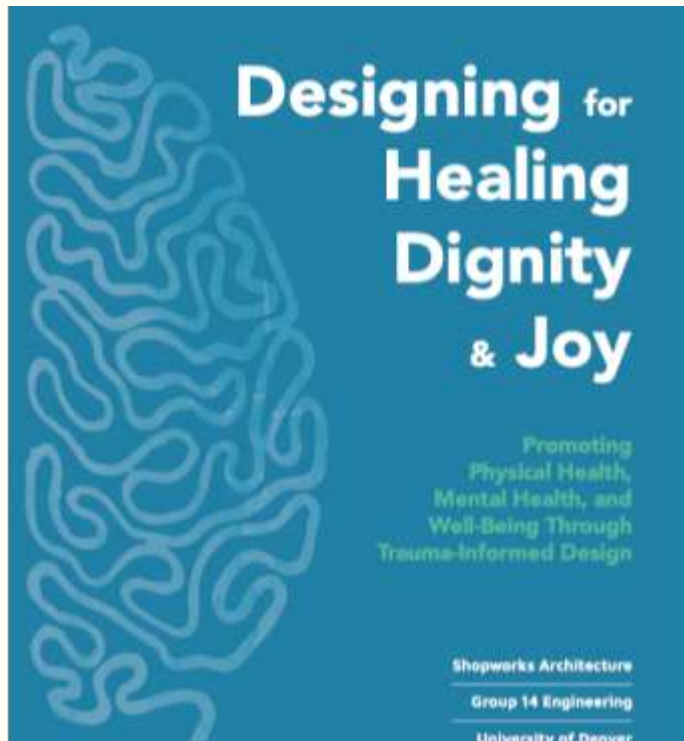
All ages activities  
 FREE ACCESSIBLE ACTIVITY  
 a place to sit and watch the world go by  
 Somewhere warm  
 Safe & welcoming  
 Makes you feel good  
 A REFLECTIVE SPACE  
 Somewhere to sit that isn't too beautiful  
 A nice hot drink  
 Somewhere you feel SAFE, WITH NICE PEOPLE ABOUT  
 FRIENDLY & COMFORTING  
 BEING BY THE SEA  
 QUIET  
 Somewhere for kids  
 A safe space for kids  
 Somewhere spacious + light  
 Somewhere to get out of the buggy + play or sit making use of an empty space + taking to library  
 Well catered for  
 NOT DAMP  
 NICE SMELLS  
 Talking therapies, healing activities  
 a calming quiet, sensory space  
 Somewhere for children  
 Somewhere to break the monotony of shopping  
 Somewhere to get out of the buggy + play or sit making use of an empty space + taking to library  
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[www.Shopworksarc.com/tid](http://www.Shopworksarc.com/tid)





Slide credit & Reference:  
Chad Holzinger & Dr. Jennifer Wilson  
[www.Shopworksarc.com/tid](http://www.Shopworksarc.com/tid)


# CHOICE



*Laurel House | Grand Junction, Colorado, USA*

“The Laurel House Apartments offers 34 one-bedroom apartments that will provide permanent, safe housing to youth in the Grand Valley who are most at risk of long-term homelessness. The program provides young people with access to mental health services and assists in finding jobs at local businesses. They also provide help with school enrolment, substance abuse mitigation, and life-skills training.”

Slide credit & Reference:  
Chad Holzinger & Dr. Jennifer Wilson  
[www.Shopworksarc.com/tid](http://www.Shopworksarc.com/tid)



“A physical environment that is dangerous, that feels unstable or unpredictable, will have our nervous system in a state of **hyperarousal**,” Vázquez notes, “while a **physical environment that communicates consistency, predictability and care** will calm our nervous system.”

“Being in a supportive community, having connections with other people and **the natural world**, and taking opportunities to move and be safely grounded in the body all play important roles. Trauma is all-encompassing, and so trauma healing is all-encompassing”

['Trauma-Informed Placemaking' Gives Cities Space to Heal - Bloomberg](#)



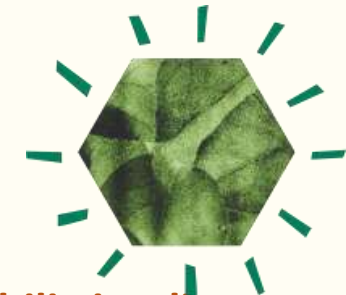
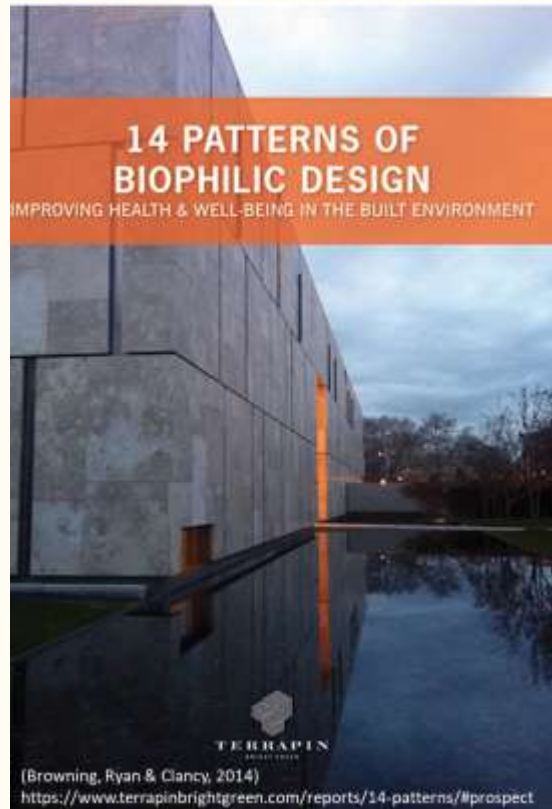
# Nature and Recovery.....

## Ulrich stress recovery theory

- US study during the 1980s found that patients who were recovering from gall bladder surgery had quicker, and more positive recovery experiences when their bed faced a view of trees and nature compared to those who faced a brick wall. (8.5% shorter hospital stay, patients took fewer analgesics)

## Attention restoration theory

- Nature has a restorative effect and acts as a form of retreat in response to high mental demand scenarios requiring sustained periods of attention
- Natural environment restores ability to direct and control attention



**“The concept of biophilia implies that humans hold a biological need for connection with nature on physical, mental, and social levels and this connection affects our personal well-being, productivity, and societal relationships” – Sheeps Meadow, 2004 (in 14 Patterns of Biophilic Design)**

**“Biophilia is the innately emotional affiliation of human beings to other living organisms” – E.O. Wilson, 1984 (in 14 Patterns of Biophilic Design)**





<https://www.terramai.com/blog/biophilic-design-real-life-examples/>

## 'Nature in Space' – Direct experiences of nature



<https://www.terramai.com/blog/biophilic-design-real-life-examples/>



<https://www.pinterest.co.uk/pin/253046072794066932/>



‘Natural Analogues’  
—  
Indirect or  
representational  
experiences of  
nature



<http://blendconcepts.com/2016/06/biophilic-design-features-for-environments/>





Refuge



Prospect



<https://www.terrabinbrightgreen.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/641-Case-Study-Fall15.pdf>

‘Nature of the Space’ – Prospect, refuge, mystery, risk/peril, awe

“Refuge conditions have been shown to improve concentration, attention and perception of safety while also reducing irritation and fatigue.”  
([Terrapin Bright Green](#))



# 'Buildings Speak to Us'

Dr Khadj Rouf, Dr Angela Sweeney, Dr  
Angela Kennedy, Lisa Ward

How can we make people feel welcome?

What helps people feel safe?

How does the space increase soothing across the senses?

How do we ensure privacy and dignity?

What messages do we give about recovery?

**A research-as-publication project to understand the role of trauma and healing in place-based practice, research and theory**

[Trauma-Informed Placemaking \(traumainformed.place\)](http://traumainformed.place)

[The Nightingale Project \(@nightingale\\_project\) | Instagram](#)  
by Dr Nick Rhodes



Visit our [webpage](#)

Sign up to our [mailing list](#)

E: [rachel.turnbull@ahsn-nenc.org.uk](mailto:rachel.turnbull@ahsn-nenc.org.uk)



**Arts and Creative Placemaking**  
Thursday 18th May 2023  
13:00 - 15:00 GMT Online

Best practice approaches to working in collaboration with artists to design places that nurture wellbeing and engage local communities - everyone welcome.

#HealthyHappyPlaces

Academic Health Science Network  
North East and North Yorkshire  
ICS



**Trauma Informed Placemaking**  
Tuesday 7th March 2023  
13:00 - 15:00 GMT Online

With shared learning and experience from architecture, artists, placemakers and psychology. Join us - all are welcome!

Register now!

#HealthyHappyPlaces

Academic Health Science Network  
North East and North Yorkshire  
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**Suicide prevention by design**  
Wednesday 11 January, 2023  
1-3pm GMT, Online

Sharing work from public health, planning, design, and community. Everyone welcome.

#HealthyHappyPlaces

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**Biophilic Design**  
Working with nature through design and its impact on mental health and wellbeing

This webinar will explore the elements of biophilic design, the psychological impacts and experience of mimicking nature in design, the clinical experience of incorporating nature into therapy, and showcase examples of biophilic design in internal and external spaces through the lens of architecture and urban planning.

Thursday 17th February 2022 13:00 - 14:30 #HealthyHappyPlaces

REGISTRATION OPEN

Academic Health Science Network  
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ICS



**Bottom Up Urbanism**  
Tackling wellbeing in the built environment through citizen participation and leadership

This webinar will explore some of the creative and community driven approaches to creating vibrant spaces and places that contribute and support wellbeing and mental health

Thursday, July 5, 2022, 11:00-12:30 GMT

#HealthyHappyPlaces

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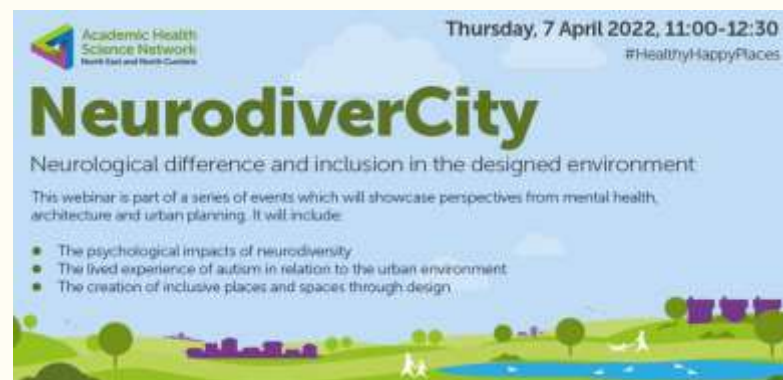
**Dementia Friendly Environments**  
How do we design places and spaces that prevents and supports people living with dementia?

This innovative webinar will bring together practitioners from the built environment, medical and therapeutic disciplines, and academia to share and celebrate best practice to build a collaborative approach to planning and design.

Thursday 19th May 2022, 13:00-14:30 GMT

#HealthyHappyPlaces

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North East and North Yorkshire  
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**NeurodiverCity**  
Neurological difference and inclusion in the designed environment

This webinar is part of a series of events which will showcase perspectives from mental health, architecture and urban planning. It will include:

- The psychological impacts of neurodiversity
- The lived experience of autism in relation to the urban environment
- The creation of inclusive places and spaces through design.

Thursday, 7 April 2022, 11:00-12:30

#HealthyHappyPlaces

Academic Health Science Network  
North East and North Yorkshire  
ICS



**Healing Environments**  
How do places and spaces play a role in how we feel and heal?

**SPEAKERS**

- Dr Rachel Turnbull, Programme Lead for Healthy Happy Places, AHSN NENC
- Dr Angela Kennedy, Head of Centre for Specialist Psychological Therapies, Cumbria Northumberland Tyne & Wear NHS Foundation Trust
- Timothy Crawshaw, Vice President of the Royal Town Planning Institute
- Christopher Shaw, Chair of Architects for Health and Senior Director at Medical Architecture

#HealthyHappyPlaces Thursday 2nd December 2021 11:00 - 12:15

REGISTRATION OPEN

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